Increasing the Volume of Students’ Reading: Case Studies

Rank order the following scenarios with “1” being “the most aligned to key ideas from this session” and “5” being “the least aligned to key ideas from this session.” Add your ranking to the line just before the description begins.

Case Study A

_____ Mr. Jones wants to increase his students’ volume of reading. He carefully arranges his classroom library into buckets of books on all kinds of topics by reading levels. He assigns students to specific buckets based on the scores they received on their last district-wide reading assessment, about 8 weeks ago. Students are excited to dig into their specific buckets, but many notice other books from other buckets that they are interested in as well. Mr. Jones discourages the students from choosing from other buckets. “I know these books are the right ones for you,” he tells them. “If you choose from those other buckets, you’ll get frustrated and quit reading.” Mr. Jones provides time for reading each day after lunch. Students read silently, and then put their books away.

Case Study B

_____ Ms. Shanahan and Mr. Price are co-teachers in an inclusion classroom who are creative about increasing their students’ volume of reading. They decide they will establish an independent reading program in which students will read together in groups, “book club” style. The groups will take turns meeting with one of the teachers during lunch to talk about their books. Ms. Shanahan and Mr. Price carefully create heterogeneous groups of 5 students. When the groups meet for the first time, they are encouraged to give their book club a name. The teachers preview 5 books for the class and ask each group to take a vote on which book they should read. “Majority rules!” they say. “Also you may not get your first choice because we only have so many of each book.” The groups vote – one group is unanimous and get their first choice book, one group is 3-2 and the get the first choice book of the 3, one group is 4-1 and they get the first choice book of the 4, the fourth group is unanimous, but their first choice book is already taken so they get another book, and the last group is 4-1 and they end up with the second choice book of the 4, but the first choice book of the 1. When the book clubs are meeting they take turns reading aloud. Students love the time they spend with a teacher during lunch and are excited to recount key moments in the plot of the books they are reading.

Case Study C

_____ Mrs. Smith is determined to increase her students’ volume of reading. She takes her students to the library and students are encouraged to find a book that appeals to them. Many students select a book right away and settle down to reading. Mrs. Smith visits with a few of those students, asking, “Why did you choose this book?” She is surprised when several of her students say, “I’ve read it before, so I know I like it.” Mrs. Smith figures any reading at all is a good thing, so she does not push on their decisions. She and
the librarian both check in on the students who are having a harder time selecting something to read. Both talk with students about their interests. Mrs. Smith shows her kids several books that she really likes herself. Almost all of the kids leave the library with a book. Mrs. Smith tells the kids without a book they will have to choose something because they will be getting a grade for independent reading this semester. Mrs. Smith tells all of the students they will need to have a letter signed from their parents to get their independent reading points.

Case Study D

______ Mr. Hernandez is on a mission to increase his students’ volume of reading. The class is studying the refugee experience, so he gathers books, essays, memoirs and articles about refugees from a variety of cultures and authors and displays the materials all around his classroom. The books are arranged on a cart parked prominently in the front of the room. The essays, memoirs, and articles are hung using magnetic clips from a display rail along the back wall of the classroom. “Whenever you want any of these things, just help yourself,” he says to his students. “These are all here for you any time you want.” Mr. Hernandez is delighted when students start accessing the materials. The articles, essays, and memoirs are all taken by the end of the unit. Mr. Hernandez offers extra credit to any student who writes a summary about what they read.

Case Study E

______ Mrs. Price is planning to increase her students’ volume of reading. The class is studying the importance of fresh water around the world. She gathers a variety of fiction and non-fiction books related to the topic, taking care to represent multiple cultures, authors, and perspectives. Mrs. Price lays all of the books out on tables around the room and, gives her students time to look at, pick up, thumb through and “test drive” as many books and articles as they can. Students select books and articles they are interested in. Mrs. Price notes the few students who’ve selected easier books who could handle more challenging ones and a boy who has a challenging book he might struggle with. She plans to guide the stronger readers more directly during the next book frenzy and will check in with the less ready reader often, perhaps encouraging him to switch, perhaps not, as she knows his interest might mean he knows a lot about the topic. Mrs. Price establishes a time for silent, independent reading and a time and protocol for her students to “chat” in pairs about the connections both in content and author’s craft that they are making between the complex texts they are studying as together as a class and the books and other things they are reading on their own.